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## Origin of American Aborigines

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**Abstract:** The prophet Joseph Smith taught in the Nauvoo House concerning the stick of Joseph, Ephraim, and Manasseh. Lehi was of the family of Manasseh and Ishmael and his family were of the house of Ephraim. The one hundred sixteen lost pages of the Book of Mormon contained a clear account of Ishmael's ancestry. That is the reason, the prophet said, that no mention of Ishmael's genealogy is in the Book of Mormon. Richards discusses the marriage relationships and union of the families. Lehi's sons married Ishmael's daughters thus combining the two tribes. Richards writes that this fulfills the prophecy in Genesis 48:20 that Ephraim and Manasseh together should become a multitude of nations.

## ORIGIN OF AMERICAN ABORIGINES.

AWAY back in 1843, while the Church was located in Nauvoo, Illinois, the Prophet Joseph was led to build a house—the Nauvoo Mansion—for the entertainment of visitors and the traveling public, who for various reasons called to see the beautiful location, the rising Temple, and listen to the inspired teachings of the latter-day Prophet.

One day in the autumn of that year, as I was passing near, it being in warm weather, I observed the door standing open and the Prophet Joseph inside conversing with one of the brethren, leaning against the counter. It being a public house, I ventured to walk in, and scarcely had more than time to exchange usual civilities, when this brother said: "Brother Joseph, how is it that we call the Book of Mormon the Stick of Joseph in the hands of Ephraim, when the book itself tells us that Lehi was of the lineage of Manasseh? I cannot find in it about the seed of Ephraim dwelling on this land at all." Joseph replied: "You will recollect that when Lehi and his family had gone from Jerusalem out into the wilderness, he sent his son Nephi back to the city to get the plates which contained the law of Moses and many prophecies of the prophets, and that he also brought out Ishmael and his family, which were mostly daughters. This Ishmael and his family were of the lineage of Ephraim, and Lehi's sons took Ishmael's daughters for wives, and this is how they have grown together, 'a multitude of nations in the midst of the earth.'

"If we had those one hundred and sixteen pages of manuscript which Martin Harris got away with, you would know all about it, for Ishmael's ancestry is made very plain therein. The Lord told me not to translate it over again, but to take from Nephi's other plates until I came to the period of time where

the other translation was broken off, and then go on with Mormon's abridgment again. That is how it came about that Ishmael's lineage was not given in the Book of Mormon, as well as Lehi's."

This explanation from the Prophet himself made a deep and abiding impression upon my mind, as I had but recently been reading the passage referred to in the third verse of the tenth chapter of Alma, and was pondering over the same thing with anxious desire to know how this could be, if the ancestry of the race were all of Manasseh.

Now, in the light of this explanation by Joseph the Prophet and Seer, let us look a little more carefully at what is said in the sacred record about the marriage relations and union of these two families, who constitute the common progenitors of that immense population that has inhabited the lands of North and South America for almost two thousand five hundred years.

First, then, we have the fact that Lehi and his family were of Manasseh, that Ishmael and his family were of Ephraim, and they inter-marrying with each other fulfilled the prophecy of their great father, the Patriarch Jacob, who in blessing them said, (*Genesis xlviii: 20*), that Ephraim should be greater than Manasseh; but that they together should become a multitude of nations in the midst of the earth.

Let us consider the relative numbers of these two families: Lehi, his wife Sariah, and their sons—Laman, Lemuel, Sam and Nephi—six souls of the tribe of Manasseh, all males but one; Ishmael, his wife, two sons and their families, and five daughters—eleven souls of the tribe of Ephraim—providing Ishmael's sons had no children; but as the record speaks of "them and their families," instead of "and their wives," the probability is that they

both had children, which would increase their total of souls as many as there were grandchildren among them, all of whom were of the blood of Ephraim.

For the present computation we will only include the number specified. Then there was Zoram, the servant of Laban, who came out with Nephi, after assisting him to obtain the brass plates which contained the five books of Moses, etc.

We are informed in I. Nephi xvi: 7, that Zoram took Ishmael's eldest daughter to wife, and that Nephi, Laman, Lemuel and Sam, each married one of Zoram's wife's sisters, which disposed of all five of Ishmael's daughters. What, then was the tribal relation of this new colony, about to leave their native land for a country which the Lord had promised to lead them to, and to give unto them and their children after them?

But before summing up, we will notice the law by which it must be done, "for only to the family of the tribe of their father shall they marry," (*Numbers xxxvi: 6*). So we find that Lehi and four sons became the heads of five families of the half tribe of Manasseh; while Ishmael and his two sons became the heads of three families of the half tribe of Ephraim, besides furnishing wives to three of the families in Manasseh, and a wife to Zoram. From which tribe Zoram sprang we are not positively informed, but the probabilities that he belonged to one or the other of the half tribes of Joseph are greater than that he was of any other tribe in Israel.

The reference to the Zoramites as being among the chosen seed on this continent, contained in the revelation concerning the Book of Mormon in July, 1828, is corroborative evidence that Zoram was of the house of Joseph. It says:

"Nevertheless my work shall go forth, for inasmuch as the knowledge

of the Savior has come unto the world, through the testimony of the Jews, even so shall the knowledge of a Savior come unto my people.

"And to the Nephites, and the Jacobites, and the Josephites, and the Zoramites, through the testimony of their fathers.

"And this testimony shall come to the knowledge of the Lamanites, and the Lemuelites, and the Ishmaelites, who dwindled in unbelief because of the iniquities of their fathers." (*Doctrine and Covenants 3: 16-18*).

Zoram is here classed with all the other members of the family of Joseph, who colonized this land and who were the progenitors of the present tribes of Indians.

The origin of the American aborigines will not be fully traced, without mention of the distinctively Jewish strain in the racial blood. When Zedekiah, king of Judah, was carried captive into Babylon, and his sons were slain before his eyes, a colony was directed of the Lord to come to this continent. This was about eleven years after the departure of Lehi from Jerusalem. Among the latter colonists was Mulek, a son of Zedekiah, who escaped the massacre and, being of royal blood, the country where the newcomers landed was named after him. This was in the southern part of North America. Their descendants were discovered by Mosiah and his people when they fled from the land of Nephi and settled in Zarahemla. The whole of North America was afterwards called Mulek by the Nephites, and South America was called Lehi. Particulars will be found in *Omni 1: 15-22*; *Helaman 6: 10*; and *II. Kings xxv: 1-7*.

Let us now consider the relative proportionate number of each; but while doing this it will be necessary to keep in mind the law and usage of Israel, that each tribe should marry with persons of their own tribe, so as to retain each member

of each tribe separate and distinct from those of each other tribe; and the more effectually to do this, each family of each tribe carefully preserved and perpetuated their pedigree, or the genealogy of their ancestry, as is shown in Matthew, first chapter, that the reputed ancestry of our Savior was through the tribe of Judah.

We find that they of Manasseh were Lehi, his wife Sariah and four sons—five men and one woman.

They of Ephraim were Ishmael, his wife, two sons, their wives, and five daughters—three men and eight women.

If Zoram were of Manasseh, then—six men and one woman—or, if of Ephraim, then four men and eight women.

In either case, eighteen souls—nine men and nine women, all properly paired in marital relations as heads of families to people this choice above all other lands—the land of Joseph.

Of the tribe of Judah, through “Mulek and those who came with him into the wilderness,” so little is given us of them that we can make no definite account of the racial proportion of the blood of Judah as mixed with the seed of Joseph, but that it was considerable, is evident from *Mosiah xxv*:

“Now there were not so many of the children of Nephi, or so many of those who were descendants of Nephi, as there were of the people of Zarahemla, who was a descendant of Mulek, and those who came with him into the wilderness:

“And there were not so many of the people of Nephi and of the people of Zarahemla as there were of the Lamanites: yea, they were not half so numerous.”

Of this we are certain, that whatever the proportion of each tribe might be in its outset, He who giveth the increase and holds the issues of life and death in His hands, has ordered

it all according to the counsel of His own will, and will not allow one jot or tittle of His word to fail, or to return to Him void, but that it shall accomplish the thing whereunto it was sent.

Mulek being of the royal house of Judah, it is probable that the company with whom he came to this continent were of the same blood. Little, however, can be learned on this subject from the meagre account given of that colony in the Book of Mormon. It is thought by some students of the Scriptures that reference is made to the removal of Mulek from Jerusalem to America in the following prediction of Ezekiel, chapter xvii: 20–22.

“And I will spread my net upon him, and he shall be taken in my snare, and I will bring him to Babylon, and will plead with him there for his trespass that he hath transgressed against me.

“And all his fugitives with all his bands shall fall by the sword, and they that remain shall be scattered toward all winds; and ye shall know that I the Lord have spoken it.

“Thus saith the Lord God; I will also take of the highest branch of the high cedar, and will set it; I will crop off from the top of his young twigs a tender one, and will plant it upon an high mountain and eminent.”

As much of Ezekiel's denunciations in chapter xii and succeeding chapters are against Zedekiah, there is some plausibility in this interpretation. However that may be viewed, it is clear to unbiased readers of the Bible, (“Whoso readeth let him understand,”) that Jacob, the patriarch, and Moses, the prophet, had each the eyes of the inspired seer when they spoke of the blessings that should come upon Ephraim and Manasseh in the land of Joseph, and that they beheld the continent of America as the future abode of Joseph's seed.

In Genesis, 48th chapter, we read of Joseph's father setting Ephraim before Manasse—the younger before the elder—and declaring their seed should become a multitude of nations. In chapter xlix: 23-26, we find the following:

"Joseph is a fruitful bough, even a fruitful bough by a well, whose branches run over the wall.

"The archers have sorely grieved him, and shot at him, and hated him.

"But his bow abode in strength, and the arms of his hands were made strong by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob; (from thence is the shepherd, the stone of Israel).

"Even by the God of thy father, who shall help thee, and by the Almighty, who shall bless thee with blessings of heaven above, blessings of the deep that lieth under, blessings of the breasts and of the womb;

"The blessings of thy father have prevailed above the blessings of my progenitors, unto the utmost bound of the everlasting hills; they shall be on the head of Joseph, and on the crown of the head of him that was separate from his brethren."

Moses pronounced similar blessings upon Joseph and Joseph's land. (*Deuteronomy xxxiii: 13-17.*)

"And of Joseph he said, Blessed of the Lord be his land, for the precious things of heaven, for the dew, and for the deep that coucheth beneath.

"And for the precious fruits brought forth by the sun, and for the precious things put forth by the moon.

"And for the chief things of the ancient mountains, and for the precious things of the lasting hills,

"And for the precious things of the earth and the fullness thereof, and for the good will of him that dwelt in the bush: let the blessing come upon the head of Joseph, and upon the top of the head of him

that was separated from his brethren," etc.

All these predictions are wonderfully and completely fulfilled in the "multitude of nations" found in the tribes of the red men, on the land where are the "ancient mountains," the "everlasting hills," reaching from the far north to the extreme south of the continent, famed for the "precious things of earth" so vast and varied; and the choice things of heaven compiled in the Book of Mormon, the stick of Joseph in the hand of Ephraim and the tribes of Israel his companions, with which the people are to be brought together on this land from the ends of the earth." (*Ezekiel xxxvii: 15-19.*)

In addition to these evidences there is the fact revealed through the Prophet Joseph Smith, who was of the lineage of Joseph through the loins of Ephraim, that the majority of the people who have been first to receive the Gospel and Priesthood of the latter-day dispensation, are descendants of some of the house of Ephraim scattered among the nations, (*Hosea viii: 8*), and therefore the stick of Joseph—the Book of Mormon—is in their hands, to be joined with the stick of Judah—the Bible—and the records have become one, for the gathering of Israel and the accomplishment of the great work of God in the last days. And the time is at hand when Ephraim and Judah will be fully redeemed and the mountains of Israel will resound with praises to the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, to whom be glory for evermore.

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Historian.

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## AN INCIDENT.

DURING the American War of Independence, the captain of a little band of soldiers was giving orders to those under him, about a beam that they were trying to raise to the